

BLISSYMBOLICS
COMMUNICATION
INTERNATIONAL

ANNUAL
REPORT

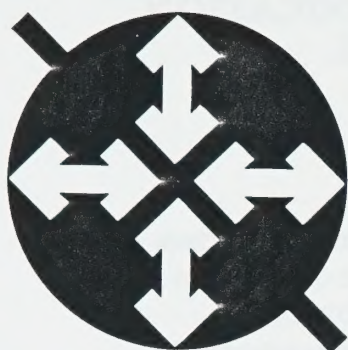
1991/92

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BLISSYMBOLICS COMMUNICATION INTERNATIONAL

OBJECTIVES

Blissymbolics Communication International considers the international system of Blissymbolics to be a valuable form of augmentative communication that contributes to communicative, cognitive and social development;

Blissymbolics Communication International holds the noncancelable, perpetual, worldwide licence to the copyright to use, teach, and disseminate Blissymbols for use by persons with handicaps such as communication, language and learning difficulties;

Blissymbolics Communication International is committed to:

- promoting the appropriate use of Blissymbolics worldwide;
- developing the system and presentation standards of Blissymbolics;
- developing and providing consultation and support to Blissymbol applications, including software, publishing and teaching materials;
- maintaining standards relating to the system presentation and training of Blissymbolics;
- undertaking the above through international collaboration.

BLISSYMBOLICS COMMUNICATION INTERNATIONAL

ANNUAL REPORT 1991-92

This report covers the activities of Blissymbolics Communication International from June 1991 - August 1992. The past fourteen months have again reflected a period of great accomplishment, change and challenge for BCI.

Accomplishment has come in several forms. In August 1992 we were extremely proud and honoured to receive the Distinguished Service Award from ISAAC (International Society of Augmentative and Alternative Communication) at their 5th Biennial Conference. The presentation of the award was made by Arlene Kraat, President of ISAAC to Shirley McNaughton, who continues to contribute her vision and efforts to Blissymbolics and BCI as a Board member, volunteer and consultant; to Paul Marshall, a former Blissymbol user, who is now an AAC colleague in every sense of the word; and to Shona McDonald, a parent of a young Blissymbol user, who is helping to develop an AAC program in South Africa. These three people well represent Blissymbols and everything that BCI has been involved in over the past two decades. This outstanding recognition serves to underline that our work is an extremely worthwhile endeavour as seen by knowledgeable people in the field of augmentative and alternative communication.

Other accomplishments over the past year have included the completion of one of our most ambitious and important publications, the **Blissymbol Reference Guide**; the hosting of the first BCI Bliss Camp in Orlando, Florida in May 1992; the publication of the first edition of a newsletter, *BlissWorld*; the completion of several other Bliss projects, including **BlissLiteracy**, an IBM computer program and **StoryBliss**, a Macintosh computer program, both for Bliss users making the transition to reading and writing; and a series of 16 booklets on sexuality, **Being Sexual**.

BCI demonstrated software and publications at two major conferences in 1992 - the Rehabilitation Engineers Society of North America (RESNA) in Toronto in June 1992; and the ISAAC Conference in Philadelphia in August 1992.

Profound change came about in November 1991 with the closing of ESCI (Easter Seal Communication Institute), a service agency that had originated with BCI and had become a department of The Easter Seal Society in 1990. It was with regret and sadness that we bade farewell to our friends and colleagues, with whom we had shared office space, equipment and information over the years. •

Challenge has faced BCI with the ongoing problem of funding, reduced support staff and smaller office space, as we attempt to continue to innovate and respond to the changing needs of Blissymbol users and their instructors.

PERSONNEL

Board of Directors

Over the past year, BCI has continued to receive much appreciated assistance from the Board of Directors (Appendix A). They have provided leadership, encouragement and dedication to the objectives of BCI and we thank them for their commitment. The Executive Committee has been particularly supportive during this period of reduced staffing.

The Board continues to be responsible for policy matters and determining the directions BCI will pursue. However, the reduced staff complement available to implement these plans and reduced funds have meant that the Board of Directors is also a working Board.

We received with regret the resignation of Kenneth Ridge, the representative of The Easter Seal Society on the BCI Board. We are pleased to welcome six new members to the Board of Directors, including Henry Sumi, who will become the Easter Seal representative; Johan Destrooper; Esther Geva; Craig Hoskins; Gwen Mann; and Paula Stanovich.

Volunteers/Consultants

With reduced staff, we have had to rely increasingly on the contributions of consultants and volunteers (Appendix A) over the past year. BCI continues to benefit from their efforts and a special note of thanks is extended to those committed people who have helped us in our work in support of Blissymbolics in 1991-92. Their dedication is vital to BCI's accomplishments.

AFFILIATES/ASSOCIATES

BCI holds the exclusive licence for the worldwide rights to use, publish, teach and disseminate Blissymbolics for people with communication, language and learning difficulties. Through formal agreement, BCI grants a sublicense to centres and/or individuals who have a strong interest in Blissymbolics and its applications (Appendix B). BCI affiliate responsibilities include information dissemination, consultation and Blissymbol training.

We were pleased to welcome our newest Affiliate from Bogota, Columbia in November 1991.

An international Affiliate meeting was held in Pottstown, Pennsylvania in August 1992 immediately following the ISAAC Biennial Conference in Philadelphia. There were ten countries represented and each participant brought a unique perspective to the meeting. Several recommendations resulted from the two days of indepth discussion, including proposals for increasing participation in the approval process for new Blissymbols.

In May 1992, the first BCI Bliss Camp was held near Orlando, Florida. Thirty campers were in attendance and we were pleased to welcome 11 present or former Bliss users. Activities included demonstration and training on several computer programs that include Blissymbols; trips to Disney World and Epcot Center; games, swimming, hayride and campfire.

The International Panel (Appendix C) serves as an advisory body to BCI and is comprised of representatives from different countries, language backgrounds and professions who have experience in using or teaching Blissymbolics.

A BCI network of Blissymbol Monitors (Appendix D) throughout the world ensures that a standard graphic form of Blissymbols appears in publications, computer software and communication devices.

FUNDING

These are difficult times for the Canadian economy and consequently for the organizations and individuals dependent on it. This, combined with the growing competition for scarce donor dollars and our inexperience in fundraising, has resulted in our efforts to date falling far short of our needs.

Two new major thrusts are underway which we hope will improve our situation. One is a personal letter writing campaign that has been enthusiastically undertaken by friends of BCI and we thank them for helping us in such a personal way. We are also introducing *Friends of Bliss*, which will provide an opportunity for those who wish to contribute to BCI on an annual basis.

We gratefully acknowledge the continued financial support of The Easter Seal Society. We also appreciate assistance in 1991-92 from other sources including:

Special Project funding:

The Bradshaw Trust Foundation

The Henry White Kinnear Foundation

International Business Machines Corporation

Bank of Montreal - Our People Fund

Confederation Life

Hugh MacMillan Rehabilitation Centre

Pilot Clubs of Ontario

Richview Residents Association

and

generous individuals

The support and interest of these donors is greatly appreciated.

PROJECTS

A number of BCI projects have been completed this year:

Blissymbol Reference Guide: (© 1992 BCI) This new publication is a revised version of Blissymbols For Use, the alphabetical ordering of symbols. It contains over 2200 Blissymbols, an expanded list of synonyms and many teaching tips. It was published in June 1992.

BlissWorld: The first edition of this newsletter was mailed in Spring 1992 to those people on the BCI mailing list, including many Ontario Bliss users who responded to a BCI questionnaire sent in the fall of 1991. The second edition is expected to be mailed in October 1992.

StoryBliss: (© 1992 BCI) This computer program for the Macintosh computer allows Blissymbol users to read and write their own stories, using words and/or Blissymbols. It incorporates AccessBliss.

BlissLiteracy: (© 1992 BCI) This IBM computer program, developed by Dolman Engineering, is appropriate for students making the transition from Blissymbol communication to reading and writing in print. Translation from Blissymbol syntax to English syntax is a unique feature of this program.

Being Sexual: An Illustrated Series on Sexuality and Relationships for People with Disabilities: (© 1992 SIECCAN) This 16 booklet sex education series was designed for young adults and adults, including those with developmental disabilities. Authors are Susan Ludwig and Dave Hingsburger with key passages translated into Blissymbols by Claudia Wood.

Julius and His Friend the Computer: (© Oxford University Press, South Africa) This children's story about a young boy with cerebral palsy, written and illustrated by Thelma Chait with Blissymbol translation by Annalu Waller and typesetting by BCI, was published in June 1992.

BMW: (© 1992 Semantic Compaction Systems) Blissymbol component • Minspeak • Words Strategy, developed by Shirley McNaughton, represents a method of encoding Blissymbols for use on the Liberator™, Touch Talker™ or Light Talker™. It is available from Prentke Romich Company in Wooster, Ohio.

Several other projects will continue in 1992-93:

IDON Corporation (Ottawa, Canada) has submitted for approval the standard Blissymbolics code table to the International Organization of Standards (ISO) in Geneva. The two-byte code table will enable Blissymbols to be included with other data in computers and other communication devices according to international standards. A number of computer manufacturers have indicated that they will support the new ISO character set standards in their next generation of equipment.

BlissNet: This telecommunications program, developed by IDON Corporation, will allow the transfer of Blissymbols over telephone lines, using Macintosh and IBM computers (donated by Apple Canada and IBM Canada to the field trial). In October 1992 a field trial, sponsored by the Canadian Federal Department of Communications, will begin training Blissymbol users in Toronto, Ottawa, and St. John's.

AccessBlissboard: This is a new computer program, developed by Russell Galvin, which will allow Blissymbol users to access Blissymbols on the Macintosh computer in the same format as their portable Bliss board. It will be available from BCI in the fall of 1992.

BCI will continue discussions and negotiations with several other developers of augmentative communication software.

TRAINING

Bliss in a Day - a one day seminar offering a practical learning opportunity for those working for the first time with a Blissymbol user or for those who need a review and update of Blissymbol use today.

Two sessions were held by BCI in 1991-92:

November 14, 1991 - Toronto, Ontario
April 23, 1992 - Toronto, Ontario

In November 1991, the Zimbabwe-Canada Training Facility requested a Blissymbol Presentor to spend two weeks in Zimbabwe. Shelley Deegan, a BCI Training Associate spent two weeks there conducting a workshop for 29 augmentative communication specialists, covering such areas as the Blissymbol system; Blissymbols for communication and interaction; and Blissymbols in education. Three of the people who attended these sessions will spend three months in Canada in the fall of 1992, including two weeks internship with BCI for further training in Blissymbolics.

Dr. Annalu Waller, from the University of Dundee, Scotland will be BCI's Resident Blissymbol Specialist during October, November and December 1992. She brings her extensive knowledge of Blissymbols, experience in setting up an augmentative communication program in South Africa, and training in the area of computer sciences. She will conduct several training sessions for BCI, will work on the completion of several training manuals for software programs, and continue negotiations with other software developers.

SUMMARY

The time period covered in this report has been stimulating and challenging. As we move into 1992-93, it is our strong belief that Blissymbolics, with its language structure, still offers the best total communication system for nonspeaking persons and provides an important bridge to literacy.

As we prepare for the coming year, we are excited about our celebration on October 23, 1992 of our 21st year of the use of Blissymbols in Ontario.

APPENDIX A

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